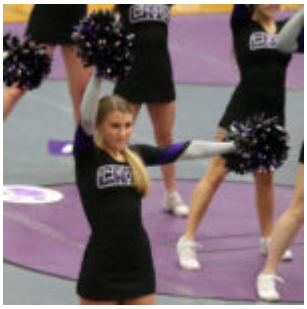
Shaffer excited to join Pittsburg State cheer program



Leia Shaffer, a 2019 Louisburg High School graduate, may have left Wildcat cheer behind, but she is ready to take it up a notch as she found out she made the Pittsburg State cheer squad earlier this spring and is excited for what is in store for her.

Cheerleading has always been a big part of Leia Shaffer's life.

Shaffer started cheering in the fourth grade and she has been hooked ever since. However, now that her high school cheer career is over, she wasn't ready to give up the sport.

The recent Louisburg High School graduate decided to try out for the Pittsburg State cheer squad in late March and she got the news she was hoping for. Shaffer earned a spot on the Gorilla cheerleading team after some nerve-racking tryouts.

"I was really surprised because I didn't think I was going to make it," Shaffer said. "I had to wait a while to see if I was going to or not and when I found out I called my mom right away. I was just so happy, but more so I was pretty surprised."

It wasn’t the easiest of processes for Shaffer as she had to take part in two days worth of tryouts – some of which as a little unfamiliar to her. Also, it didn’t help that she was one of the last to be called on.

“I was actually the very last person to go,” Shaffer said. “It was a little nerve-racking cause it is not the same as high school, so I wasn’t used to doing some of the things you do in college. It is a little different than high school cause there is less stuff to focus on, but the things you do are a lot harder. All the stunts are co-ed. You get assigned one person to stunt with and you do the best you can with them and then you can pick someone.”

Almost a decade worth of cheer helped prepare Shaffer for this moment. Her first year of competitive cheer was with the Football and Cheerleading Club of Johnson County.

Shaffer would then move on to teams at Diamond Academy, Kansas City Athletic Cheer and the Cheer Pit along with four years of cheering for Louisburg High School.

“I have wanted to cheer in college ever since I started cheering in elementary school,” Shaffer said. “I wasn’t really sure where, I just knew I wanted to cheer somewhere in college. I didn’t know how it was going to go, or even if I was going to make it or not, but I just wanted it really bad.”

It was a special moment for the entire Shaffer family as Leia’s mother, Dana, has been the high school cheerleading coach for the last two seasons. As it turned out, mom wasn’t quite as surprised as daughter was.

“She told me that she didn’t think I needed to be as worried as I was,” Leia said. “She told me she thought I would be fine and that she was happy for me that I made it.

“It was fun having her as a coach,
but sometimes it is a little stressful because she can’t coach me the same as
everyone else and everyone knows that too. I have had fun with it and I am
happy I was able to share that time with her.”

Shaffer will travel to Pittsburg
at different times during the summer for workouts, before practices really kick
into high gear in August when school begins. Although cheer is going to be a
big focus for her as freshman, she is excited to begin her journey into the
nursing field as well.

“I just really hope that I have fun and learn a lot of new stuff,” Leia said. “I have done this for so long that I have learned a lot along the way, but I know there will be new things for me to learn. I am really excited to get down there, start school and get to work.”